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ABSTRACT

The University of Calgary Library has developed an automated information system to aid decision making in the area of collections development. The traditional format for collections policies in a written description of the areas and levels where a particular institution is collecting actively. Using a computer-based management information system permits frequent and rapid updating by entering new data as required. The departmental library coordinators and the subject specialists work together to ensure that the system reflects present priorities. The system enables the library administration and the various advisory committees to obtain up-to-date information by having a sort done of the pertinent data fields. (Author/PF)

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RATIONALIZING THE COLLECTIONS POLICY: A COMPUTERIZED APPROACH (ACCROISSEMENT DU FONDS DES LIVRES: UNE METHODE AUTOMATISEE)

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ABSTRACT

The University of Calgary Library has developed an automated information system to aid decision making in the area of collections development. The system identifies the desired materials by subject and form. (La Bibliothèque de l'Université de Calgary a développé un système d'information automatisé qui a pour but d'appuyer les décisions faites dans le domaine de la collection. Le système permet d'identifier les matériaux désirés par le sujet et par la forme.)

BACKGROUND

The development of a collections policy statement for the Library of the University of Calgary was the outcome of a number of initiatives beginning in 1972. These initiatives came from the University Administration, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR), the University Budget Committee, the Academic Policy Committee and the Library Services Committee. The need for a collections policy statement was also under active consideration by the Director of Information Services and the Chief Librarian.

The first desideratum for a collections policy statement for the University of Calgary was to document the Library's present holdings as well as the desired holdings by subject and type for a projected student body of 16,500. This would include a statement of procedures which would allow the Library to reach the desired level of acquisitions. The second desideratum was an allocation matrix. This would correspond to the matrix by subject and type of material. This was to take the form of guidelines for allocating the book budget, then in the order of $800,000, together with a statement of procedures. The allocation matrix was to be the fiscal embodiment of the subject matrix. The third desideratum was flexibility, the ability to modify the collections policy statement to reflect budgetary exigencies and changing priorities.

In April 1972 the University Budget Committee recommended to General Faculties Council that the Director of the Division of Information Services, in consultation with the Chief Librarian and the Library Services Committee, develop an acquisitions policy statement well in advance of the preparation of the 1974/75 Operating Budget.

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RATIONALIZING THE COLLECTIONS POLICY

The responsibility for preparing the collections policy statement was assigned to the Deputy Chief Librarian (Academic) in September 1973. Since it was then obvious that what was required of the collections policy statement was something more than the traditional written collections policy statement, it was necessary to consider alternatives to the traditional collections policy statement. One alternative was to develop a management information system which would meet the three desiderata already mentioned -- documentation, allocation, flexibility (Yavarkovsky, Mount and Kordish, 1973).

The alternative of a management information system for the traditional written collections policy statement had much in its favour at the outset, namely, the recognition of the increasing need for more readily available information about Library operations in a form that could be utilized in planning. In fact, the Director of the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) in a covering letter to the report to the Director of the Division of Information Services in July 1972 on planning Library acquisitions had observed that it was imperative that much more information about Library operations be made available in a form that would be used by both the Library and the University in planning. Management information requirements, therefore, should be an important design criterion in developing new systems for the Library. New systems in the Library should, furthermore, be compatible with University systems. It was, then, decided that the Deputy Chief Librarian and the Head of Information Systems would work together to design a management information system for this purpose. The management information system subsequently devised is the system described in this paper.

The traditional format for collections policies was a written description of the areas and levels where a particular institution was collecting actively. These depended upon whether the collection was intended to support an undergraduate program primarily, a graduate program, either masters or doctoral, faculty research and the various professional schools and institutes. The major drawback to the traditional written document was that it was frequently already out-of-date when it was submitted for ratification. This meant that the written collections policy often was simply a record of the status quo at the time the submissions were compiled. Revision was difficult and often a formidable undertaking in itself. As a result, it was understandable that revision was infrequent.

The information system which we devised as an alternative to the traditional collections policy statement had the definite advantage that it could be updated at any time as well as at regular intervals. Updating did not require the rewriting and retyping that the traditional document required because the "document" in this instance was on magnetic tape and was, therefore, as up-to-date as the latest data entered. Furthermore, this system permitted us to manipulate readily the data to provide

"hard" data for policy decisions relating to such things as periodicals, microforms, computer-based bibliographic services. The system was devised with such capabilities in mind and, in a time of fixed budgets, inflation and adverse exchange rates, these are not unimportant considerations.

Basically what we have tried to do, then, is to incorporate the traditional collections policy statement in a management information system. The computer is used for file creation, file maintenance, retrieval and reporting. We now proceed to describe Phases I and II of this system.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PHASES I AND II

Phase I

Phase I consists of a file on personnel who might best be deployed, either now or in the future, depending on organizational exigencies, for purposes of selection of materials and reference service in subject areas corresponding to the various teaching departments of the University, but not restricted to them. For this purpose we are concerned to identify readily people with strong subject backgrounds and pertinent experience. This need has become acute with the designation of subject specialists in the Library.

The file for Phase I includes the following data fields: name; division; degrees (the highest first in order); major; minor; other expertise (e.g., programming, translating, search editing, etc.); languages; librarian/graduate assistant. These are shown in figure 1.

No.	Print Control	Data Field
1	1ØØ	Name
2	3ØØ	Division
3	4ØØ	Degrees (the highest first)
4	501	Major
5	502	Minor
6	6ØØ	Other expertise
7	7ØØ	Language.
8	8ØØ	"L" or "G" or "N" signifies Librarian, Graduate Assistant, Non-Graduate respectively.

Fig. 1

We are currently expanding this file to include additional data fields which should give a more meaningful breakdown of the number of years of experience as a librarian or graduate library assistant by type of library, division and subject fields. A further data field is being provided for other related experience. The following data fields, then, will be added to the file for Phase I: total number of years of experience as a librarian and/or graduate library assistant by type of library; total number of years of experience as a librarian and/or graduate library assistant by division (Cataloguing, Information Centre, Social Sciences, etc.); total number of years of experience as a librarian and/or graduate library assistant by subject fields (Chemistry, Classics, Fine Arts, German, etc.); other related experience. Additional data fields may be added as desired.

Phase II

Phase II consists at the present time of twenty-one data fields: Department; Subject Specialist responsible for the area; Departmental Library Co-ordinator; Revision date; Subject areas/fields: subfields; Level (Graduate, Research, Undergraduate); Library of Congress Classification; Dewey Decimal Classification; Forms (i.e., manuscripts, books, journals, tapes, microforms, film, etc.); Language restrictions; Foreign language requirements (i.e., departmental or university requirements); Translations (for foreign language journals not readily available in English or French); Geographic restrictions; Chronological restrictions; Current (imprints) versus retrospective (out-of-print); Books versus periodicals (periodicals are more important in certain fields than books); Hard copy versus microform; Active life of the literature of the field (e.g., 5 years); Print versus non-print (refers to films, tapes, cassettes, slides, etc.); Content in any form available (If not available in reprint, then get it on microfilm; if not available on microfilm, get it on microfiche; if not available in microfiche, then get it on ultramicrofiche); Computer-based bibliographic services (e.g., ERIC, COMPENDEX, SPIN, GEO-REF, etc.); (Notes and Explanations referring to previous data fields). These are shown in figure 2.

No.	Print Control	Data Field
1	101	Department
2	102	Librarian Responsible for the Area
3	103	Department Co-ordinator
4	104	Revision Date
5	201 - 299	Subject Area(s)
6	301 - 310	Level (Graduate, Research, Post-Graduate)
7	311	L.C. Classification Numbers

Fig. 2

No.	Print Control	Data Field
8	351	Dewey Decimal Classification
9	401 - 499	Forms of Materials
10	506	Language Restrictions
11	507	Foreign Language Requirements
12	508	Translations
13	509	Geographical Restrictions
14	510	Chronological Restrictions
15	511	Current versus Retrospective
16	512	Books versus Periodicals
17	513	Hard Copy versus Microforms
18	514	Active Life of the Material
19	515	Print versus Non-Print
20	516	Content in any Form
21	517	Computer-based Bibliographic services
*	601 - 699	Explanations to Subject areas 201 - 299

Fig. 2

The data was gathered from some forty-five departmental library co-ordinators during the fall of 1973. This was done by means of interviews and written submissions. Transcripts of the interviews were subsequently tabulated and sent to the individual departmental library co-ordinators so that they could review them and circulate them among their colleagues for additional input and comments. The revised and corrected forms were returned to the Library Administration for coding.

We have the capability to sort by any or all of the twenty-one data fields, but in practice we probably will not sort by all. For example, the Dewey Decimal Class numbers are important only for a few fields, Drama being one. The Library of the University of Calgary uses the Library of Congress Classification.

The reports for Phase II are by department and contain all the data which appeared on the forms which the individual library co-ordinators

submitted in December. These reports were sent out to the departmental library co-ordinators for their review and, if satisfactory, their validation. The department library co-ordinators were asked to ensure that the report for their departments corresponded exactly with the original submission as revised and corrected. Any errors, revisions, or changes desired were to be reported to the office of the Deputy Chief Librarian (Academic) so that he might take appropriate action. There will be regular updates to reflect any changes in the departments. It is possible that an update every six months would be sufficient for most departments; however, more important is the fact that the file may be updated at any time. Subsequent printouts will be mailed to the departmental library co-ordinator for validation. This procedure will be adhered to strictly to ensure that the file on magnetic tape reflects as accurately as possible the changing needs and priorities of the departments.

PHASE III (PROJECTED)

Phase III will consist of departmental profiles created from the file of Phase II with the addition of appropriate descriptors and subject headings. These profiles will be used in searching various data bases, including MARC. At the present time a number of pilot studies are underway including profiles for the Department of Chemistry, English (American literature) and Engineering. A lot of work remains to be done. However, this is a significant application of Phases I and II.

SOFTWARE

The software used in this project comprises three components and was already available at the University of Calgary. As a result, no additional costs have been incurred. IBM TEXT-PAC format was used to enter data into the system. This is shown in figure 3.

Col. 1 - 12	Identification Number
Col. 13 - 15	Print-Control (denotes any of the specific data fields, e.g., co-ordinator, subject area, form, etc.)
Col. 16 - 19	Blank
Col. 20 - 80	Free text

Fig. 3

The University of Calgary has used this software for nearly five years. It has capabilities for data base creation, editing and maintenance. It permits easy updating which is essential in this instance since written collections policies tend to date quickly. The second component is a

conversion program ISSELECT to transform the variable length TEXT-PAC data base records into fixed format records to present them to the DATA-MAN report system for further processing. The third component is the DATA-MAN file management system designed by DATA-MAN, Ltd., Calgary, which provides file retrieval, maintenance and reporting capabilities. In our project we utilize its retrieval and reporting capabilities. Programs are executed under control of the DATA-MAN-360 execution processor which is run as a standard batch job under control of the IBM/360 Operating System. The files for Phases I and II are separate. There is no plan to merge them at this time.

CONCLUSION

The information system described here has been designed to fulfil the requirements of the traditional written collections policy without the usual disadvantages endemic to a written policy. Since this system permits frequent and rapid updating, the collections policy can be simply updated by entering new data as required. This does not affect the rest of the file and, above all, does not require that the whole "document" be revised. A printout may be requested at any time. The departmental library co-ordinators and the subject specialists work together to ensure that it reflects present priorities. The system enables the Library Administration and the various advisory committees to obtain up-to-date information by having a sort done of the pertinent data fields. The primary purpose of any collections policy is to ensure that the institution for which it was prepared is actively acquiring the materials (within the limits imposed by the budget) to meet defined needs of the various faculties, teaching departments, schools and institutes. This need is acute in a time of fixed budgets, adverse exchange rates and inflation. It is also essential for public accountability. We believe that the system described here is a major step towards the realization of these objectives. At the same time it is an important step in rationalizing the traditional collections policy.

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